

Speech by STB Board Member Lisa Liaw at Travel Agents and Tourist Guides Industry Forum (TATGIF) 2026 (23 July 2025)

Opening Remarks

1. Good morning. Distinguished guests, industry partners, travel agents, tourist guides, colleagues from the Singapore Tourism Board, ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the Travel Agents and Tourist Guides Industry Forum 2026.
2. Last year, our Chief Executive, Melissa Ow, shared STB's vision for Tourism 2040. Today, I would like to share a simple idea that has shaped my thinking about Singapore's tourism future.
3. I believe our future will be built on three enduring strengths: **People. Partnerships. And Technology.**
4. Our greatest competitive advantage is not our skyline. It is not our airport. It is not even our attractions. It is our people.

People

5. In today's economy, nations are increasingly recognised not only by their physical infrastructure, but also by their intangible assets—trust, reputation, innovation, creativity and human capital.
6. These are assets that cannot be easily replicated.
7. Tourism brings these intangible assets to life. Every visitor arrives with expectations. Every interaction shapes perceptions, and every memorable experience becomes a story that is shared far beyond Singapore.
8. These experiences are created by people:

9. A travel agent who curates the perfect journey. A tourist guide who brings Singapore's history and culture to life. A hospitality professional who anticipates a guest's needs before they are expressed.
10. These are not simply services. They are human capital in action.
11. During my years at American Express, I sat alongside our Travel and Lifestyle Services team, who looked after the travel arrangements and lifestyle experiences of our Centurion and Platinum Card Members.
12. Especially during the holiday season, I watched my colleagues work tirelessly—not simply booking flights or hotels, but thoughtfully curating journeys, anticipating customers' preferences and creating experiences that members would remember for years.
13. That experience taught me that exceptional customer service is never accidental.
14. It comes from people who genuinely care. People who pay attention to the smallest details. People who understand that every interaction has the potential to create a lifelong memory.
15. That lesson has stayed with me throughout my career, and it resonates even more strongly today as I look at the outstanding work of Singapore's travel agents and tourist guides.
16. Today, Singapore has around **4,000 licensed tourist guides, of whom approximately 50% are actively guiding, and 1,200 licensed travel agents.**

17. Individually, each of you makes a difference. Collectively, you represent one of Singapore's most valuable national assets.

18. Every day, you shape how visitors experience Singapore and how they remember our nation.

19. We may not always be the lowest-cost destination. But we must always strive to be among the very best in delivering value.

20. Whether someone visits Singapore for a holiday, a business meeting, a convention or an incentive trip, every visitor invests both time and money.

21. Our responsibility is to ensure they leave believing it was time well spent and money well spent.

22. That feeling is created through thoughtful service, authentic storytelling and genuine hospitality.

23. Exceptional customer experiences are one of Singapore's greatest competitive advantages.

Partnerships

24. One of Singapore's greatest strengths is not simply the excellence of individual organisations. It is the strength of our ecosystem.

25. No single organisation owns the customer's entire journey. But together, we own the customer experience.

26. From the moment someone discovers Singapore online, to their arrival at the airport, their hotel stay, their conference, their dining

experiences, attractions, neighbourhoods and nightlife—every interaction matters.

27. Every organisation contributes. Every individual has a role to play.

28. As Singapore continues to strengthen its position as one of the world's leading destinations for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions, I am reminded of the many occasions I attended the Singapore FinTech Festival during my years at American Express.

29. Each year, Singapore welcomed thousands of international investors, entrepreneurs, business leaders and policymakers from around the world.

30. The conference itself was world-class. But what truly differentiated Singapore was everything beyond the conference venue.

31. Delegates experienced our hotels, restaurants, attractions, neighbourhoods and vibrant lifestyle. Many extended their stay. Some returned with their families. Others chose Singapore again for future business events or recommended us to colleagues around the world.

32. That is the power of a connected tourism ecosystem.

33. A successful conference is not measured only by what happens inside the meeting halls. Its true value is created through the collective efforts of everyone who contributes to the visitor experience.

34. That is the multiplier effect of exceptional customer experiences.

Technology

35. Today, technology and digital media allow us to amplify those experiences even further.

36. Artificial intelligence helps us understand customer preferences, personalise recommendations, develop new tourism products and respond with greater speed and agility.

37. Digital platforms enable every tourism professional to build trusted personal brands and share authentic Singapore stories with audiences around the world.

38. Through initiatives such as the STB TRUST platform, our licensed travel agents and tourist guides can showcase their professionalism, expertise and credibility even before visitors arrive in Singapore.

39. Technology does not replace human capability. It amplifies it.

Conclusion

40. As we look ahead, our greatest opportunities will come from bringing people, partnerships and technology together.

41. People create exceptional experiences.

42. Technology amplifies our capabilities.

43. A connected tourism ecosystem multiplies our impact.

44. Together, we build trust. Together, we strengthen Singapore's reputation. Together, we shape the future of Singapore tourism.

45. To all our travel agents, tourist guides and industry partners, thank you for your professionalism, your passion and your commitment to service excellence.

46. Every memorable experience you create strengthens Singapore's reputation and contributes to one of our nation's most valuable intangible assets.

47. I hope today's discussions inspire new ideas, strengthen partnerships and encourage all of us to continue raising the bar for Singapore tourism.

48. I wish you a meaningful, productive and inspiring Travel Agents and Tourist Guides Industry Forum 2026.

49. Thank you.